

## Funeral In Islam

### **Describe the religious rites that are performed when a Muslim dies.**

In the life of every Muslim there are various steps which are natural and inevitable. Among them we can see that the sending of Man to earth, the ageing of Man and the death of Man. However, each step we met with specific code of conduct set by Allah and His prophet. Accordingly, there are several steps to be followed at the death of a person in Islam.

**Firstly**, it is required that when a Muslim is on the point to die and also at the moment of death, the kalimah of Laa ilaaha Illallah is recited repeatedly continuously. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: Exhort to recite "There is no god but Allah" to those of you who are dying.<sup>1</sup> The idea behind that is to give the chance to the dying person to recite the kalimah before his death. Narrated Mu'adh bin Jabal : The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) as saying: If anyone's last words are "There is no god but Allah" he will enter Paradise.<sup>2</sup>

**Secondly**, it is recommended to read the holy Qur'an and especially the chapter Surah Yaaseen<sup>3</sup> and surah Mulk during the last moment. Narrated Ma'qil ibn Yasar: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: Recite Surah Ya-Sin over your dying men. This is the version of Ibn al-Ala<sup>4</sup> It is also said from 'Aisha that Abu Bakr kissed the Prophet between the eyes when he had died.<sup>5</sup> Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin: I saw the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) that he kissed Uthman ibn Maz'un while he was dead, and I saw that tears were flowing (from his eyes).<sup>6</sup> It is recommended to let people know of the death as the Messenger of Allah announced the news of the death of Zaid and Ja'far before news of them came. He announced their death and his eyes were overflowing with tears.<sup>7</sup>

**Thirdly**, after the death of the person the body is washed like one when performing ghusl. It must be done in the same way as when someone is alive. Narrated Um 'Atiyya al-Ansariya: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) came to us when his daughter died and said, "Wash her thrice or five times or more, if you see it necessary, with water and Sidr (lote leaves) and then apply camphor or some camphor at the end; and when you finish, notify me." So when we finished it, we informed him and he gave us his waist-sheet and told us to shroud the dead body in it.<sup>8</sup>

**Fourthly**, it is recommended and imperative that the body of a man must be washed by men and the body of a woman must be washed by women. It is unlawful though at that time to see and look at the body of the opposite sex.<sup>9</sup> More often it is the responsibility of the family members. The whole washing of the body and everything attached to it must be done with respect and the private parts of both the man and the woman are to be washed without being seen. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: He who washes the dead should take a bath, and he who carries him should perform ablution.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Swahih Muslim 916

<sup>2</sup> Abu Dawood 3116

<sup>3</sup> Bulugh al Maram 537

<sup>4</sup> Abu Dawood 3121

<sup>5</sup> An Nasa'i 1839, 1840

<sup>6</sup> Abu Dawood 3163

<sup>7</sup> An Nasa'i 1878

<sup>8</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1253

<sup>9</sup> Abu Dawood 3140, 3141

<sup>10</sup> Abu Dawood 3161

**Next**, the dead body is then put and enveloped in white unstitched cloth known as kafan. Normally two<sup>11</sup> or three<sup>12</sup> pieces of cloth (as the prophet did) are used for men and five are used for women. It is mentioned that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) first gave us lower garment, then shirt, then head-wear, then cloak (which covers the whole body), and then she was shrouded in another garment. She said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was sitting at the door, and he had shroud with him. He gave us the garments one by one.<sup>13</sup> Only the face is allowed to be visible if mourners want to see the person for a last time. Um 'Atiyya also mentioned, "We combed her hair and divided them in three braids."<sup>14</sup> It is said that they entwined the hair (of the deceased girl) in three braids and made them fall at her back.<sup>15</sup> Narrated `Aisha: Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was shrouded in three Yemenite white Suhuliya (pieces of cloth) of cotton, and in them there was neither a shirt nor a turban."<sup>16</sup>

**More to the point**, it is a practice that the Qur'an is read and du'a of forgiveness is asked for the dead.<sup>17</sup> The Prophet told the Ashab to "Ask Allah's forgiveness for your brother."<sup>18</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) said: When you pray over the dead, make a sincere supplication for him.<sup>19</sup> Then the body is carried by men where friends and family jostle to get blessings to have carried the body even on a short distance. Narrated Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "When you see a funeral procession, you should stand up, and whoever accompanies it should not sit till the coffin is put down."<sup>20</sup> Throughout the way the kalimah is constantly recited for blessings and to avoid useless takings. It was narrated that 'Aishah said: "Something bad was said in the presence of the Prophet about a person who had died. He said: 'Do not say anything but good about your dead.'"<sup>21</sup>

**Added to the above**, the body is then carried to mosque or to an open space near the graveyard for funeral prayers. The men have to stand in rows with the body in front of them. The funeral prayer is said standing where there is no sajdah, no ruku' and no qa'dah. It consists of four Takbeer.<sup>22</sup> The first Takbeer is followed by Thana and surah Al Faatiha<sup>23</sup>, the second Takbeer is followed by Darood Ibrahim, the third Takbeer is followed by Du'a of Maghfirat and the fourth Takbeer is immediately followed by Salaam.<sup>24</sup> After that the Imam will lead some invocations like "O Allah grant forgiveness to our living and to our dead...".

**Next**, then the body is lowered for burial with the face resting in the direction of Macca. The body is laid on its back with wood covering the grave and leaving a vacuum in the grave. Then it is covered with earth. 'Amir b. Sa'd b. Abu Waqqas told that Sa'd b. Abu Waqqas said during his illness of which he died: " Make a niche for me in the side of the grave and set up bricks over me as was done in case of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)."<sup>25</sup> It was narrated that Ibn 'Abbas said: "When the Messenger of Allah was buried, a red velvet cloak was placed beneath him."<sup>26</sup> It is said that the prophet took a green leaf of a date-palm tree split it into two pieces and fixed one on each grave. The people said, "O Allah's Messenger (ﷺ)! Why have you done so?" He replied, "I hope that their punishment may be lessened till they (the leaf) become dry."<sup>27</sup> The imam presiding the burial will again ask du'a for the dead. Narrated Abu Huraira: that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) (p.b.u.h) said,

---

<sup>11</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1265, 1266, 1267, 1268

<sup>12</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1271, 1272, 1273

<sup>13</sup> Abu Dawood 3157

<sup>14</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1254

<sup>15</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1263

<sup>16</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1264

<sup>17</sup> Swahih Muslim 919

<sup>18</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1327, 1328

<sup>19</sup> Abu Dawood 3199

<sup>20</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1310

<sup>21</sup> An Nasa'i 1935

<sup>22</sup> Swahih Muslim 954

<sup>23</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1335

<sup>24</sup> An Nasa'i 1989

<sup>25</sup> Swahih Muslim 966

<sup>26</sup> An Nasa'i 2012, Tirmidhi 1048

<sup>27</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1361, An Nasa'i 2068, 2069

"Whoever attends the funeral procession till he offers the funeral prayer for it, will get a reward equal to one Qirat, and whoever accompanies it till burial, will get a reward equal to two Qirats." It was asked, "What are two Qirats?" He replied, "Like two huge mountains."<sup>28</sup>

**Furthermore**, returning home the Qur'an is read and generally on the third day a prayer is held and sometimes around the fortieth day friends and relatives come to read the Qur'an again to convey blessings of the reading on the soul of the departed. It is said that the prophet performed swalaat Janaza and asked dua after the burial.<sup>29</sup> It is said that once the prophet did this one day after the burial<sup>30</sup>, several days after the burial<sup>31</sup>, one month after the burial<sup>32</sup>, eight years after the burial<sup>33</sup>, and every day for one whole month<sup>34</sup>. It is also mentioned that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Prepare food for the family of Ja'far for there came upon them an incident which has engaged them.<sup>35</sup> The Prophet said: "Whoever consoles a person with an affliction, then he gets the same reward as him."<sup>36</sup>

**Tenthly**, It is narrated that `Abdullah said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "He who slaps the cheeks, tears the clothes and follows the tradition of the Days of Ignorance is not from us."<sup>37</sup> The Prophet said that "The deceased who is wailed over is tortured for that wailing."<sup>38</sup> Rather, it is narrated that Anas said that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The real patience is at the first stroke of a calamity." 'Uqbah bin 'Amir Al-Juhani said: "There are three times at which the Messenger of Allah forbade us to pray or to bury our dead: When the sun has risen fully until it is higher, when it reaches its zenith until it has passed the zenith, and when the sun starts to set"<sup>39</sup> This is how we should behave.

### **What is the significance of death in Islam?**

There are various significances of death in Islam.

**Firstly**, according to Islam it is recommended to get prepared for death and to make provision for sharing of wealth. Allah says in the Qur'an that "when one of you approaches death, if he leaves wealth, that he bequeath unto parents and near relatives in kindness". It is done to avoid conflict among relatives.

**Secondly**, its importance lies in the fact that it is inevitable and as it is said in the Qur'an that "every soul must taste death" and it is a departure from this world to the next world.

**Thirdly**, death signifies the return to Allah the One who has created us and our return is towards Him. Allah says to the soul in the Qur'an as "return to your Lord in content".

**Fourthly**, death signifies the start of a new blessed life in the next world. Whatever we have done good in this world will be rewarded as from the moment we are dead. Allah says in the Qur'an that "every soul will taste death. And ye will be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which ye have fairly earned".

**Fifthly**, death also signifies that we will never live forever on earth and that at the same time we are not in control of our lives. At any time death can reach us at any moment and we are thus weak and

---

<sup>28</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1325

<sup>29</sup> An Nasa'i 2025, Muslim 954

<sup>30</sup> Bukhariy Vol 2 Book 23 No. 407, 421, 424, An Nasa'i 1981, Abu Dawood 3148, Ibn Majah vol 1 book 6 no. 1530

<sup>31</sup> Muslim 956, Bukhariy 458, 1247, Abu Dawood 3203, An Nasa'i 1969

<sup>32</sup> Tirmidhi 1038

<sup>33</sup> Bukhariy 4042, Abu Dawood 3224, Muslim Book 30 No. 5689

<sup>34</sup> Tirmidhi 1037, An Nasa'i 2023, 2024

<sup>35</sup> Abu Dawood 3132, Tirmidhi 998

<sup>36</sup> Tirmidhi 1073

<sup>37</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1297, 1298, 1294

<sup>38</sup> Swahih Bukhariy 1291, 1292

<sup>39</sup> An Nasa'i 2013, 2014

perishable. This can be proved by the above verses where Allah says that we all will taste death and when Allah says that “everything is perishing except the face of Allah”.

**Sixthly**, death signifies a deep and serious sign to the Muslims that there will be their turn soon to taste death. As such it is an indication that we will be put to the severe test of Qabr with the three questions as who is your Lord?, what is your religion?, and what do you think / say on that person?. Success of these questions lies in leading a real Muslim life on earth.

**Seventhly**, for those who have not prepared for the next world and have lived on this earth as irresponsible servants of Allah, death for them signifies pain, suffering and real trial. The prophet said that at the death of these kinds of persons, their souls are afraid to step to the next world as they are afraid of punishment. Allah says that “no doubt they will see it with certainty”.

**Eighthly**, however for those who have prepared and spent their lives in the obedience of Allah, for them death signifies a relief from this world and the coming of blessing, tranquillity, safety, perfume and mat of paradise and assurance or prelude of what is waiting them in paradise. For these persons Allah says that “there is no fear on them and they are not sad”.

**Ninthly**, for these kinds of persons death signifies the sight of the Holy Prophet as from the grave and the possibility of the beatific hearing of the words of Allah giving the good news to them as “sleep as the groom sleeps”.

**Tenthly**, for these kinds of persons there is the hope of the possibility of the beatific vision of Allah. The real believers are those who long for their death and the meeting with their Lord. For them death signifies the start of the eternal peace and beauty of Aakhirah.

For a Muslim, death must be a moment where he is delighted to meet his Lord in the next world. Aakhirah for the real Muslims is symbolised by the lack of pain, sorrow, hardship, difficulties, suffering and the wait for Jannah. Death can also be painful and grievous for those who have forgotten or abandoned their Lord.